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FROM: BERLIN

TO: Secretary of State

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SENT BONN 1276, REPEATED INFORMATION DEPARTMENT 1343,

AT BRITISH RECEPTION LAST NIGHT MAYOR BRANDT INFORMALLY EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN TO ME AND TO OTHER MISSION OFFICERS REGARDING PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT ON NINE OFFICERS IN GDR CUSTODY. SAID HE UNDERSTOOD MOTIVES TO EFFECT SPEEDY RELEASE BUT EMPHASIZED THAT IN CONNECTION JUNE 17 CEREMONIES PEOPLE MIGHT ASK WHY NOT ESTABLISH CONTACTS FOR BENEFIT OF 17 MILLION GERMANS IF US CAN DO SO FOR SAKE OF NINE FLYERS. SENATE OFFICIAL EARLIER MADE POINT TO MISSION OFFICER THAT BERLIN HAD FIRMLY MAINTAINED PRINCIPLE OF NO CONTACT WITH PANKOW DESPITE CASES OF ARBITRARY ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT, SAYING "WE TOO WERE APPROACHED BY MOTHERS AND HAD TO CONTEND WITH PUBLIC OPINION."

SENATOR FOR JUSTICE REMARKED TO OUR LIAISON OFFICER IN CITY HALL THAT STATEMENT UNDERSTANDABLE FROM HUMANE POINT OF VIEW BUT POLITICALLY SURPRISING AND REGRETTABLE AS UNEXPECTED CHANGE WIDELY PUBLICIZED US POSITION. SENATOR ADDED THAT, IN HIS VIEW, US POSITION HAS UNFORTUNATE LEGAL CONNOTATION REGARDING FOUR POWER RESPONSIBILITY AND WOULD CREATE PRECEDENT WHICH WOULD MAKE IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR ALLIES REFUSE DEAL WITH GDR IN OTHER AREAS OF DISPUTE.

TWO LEADING SPD POLITICIANS HAVE INDEPENDENTLY EXPRESSED OPINION THAT THIS NEW DEVELOPMENT MIGHT BE OF HELP IN NORTH-RHINE WESTPHALIAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN BY PROVING CORRECTNESS OF WEHNER'S POLICY THAT CONTACT WITH PANKOW FOR ALL KINDS OF PROBLEMS IS ESSENTIAL.

WE ARE, OF COURSE, USING EVERY OCCASION TO PRESENT CONSIDERATION CONTAINED IN GUIDANCE RECEIVED FROM DEPARTMENT. WILL REPORT FUTURE PERTINENT REACTIONS.

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